

2024 REAL SALT LAKE GAME PREVIEW

UPDATED: 27 May 2024

2023 PERFORMANCES:	MLS 14W-12L-8D (50 points, 5 th West); 48 GF / 50 GA Open Cup 4W-1L (Semifinal Loss @ HOU, 1-3 AET) Leagues Cup 2W (3-0 v SEA, 3-1 v Atlas FC) 2L (0-3 v Monterrey, 0-4 @ LAFC) Playoffs 0W-1L-2T (eliminated by Houston, 4-3 aggregate)		
SPORTING DIRECTOR:	Kurt Schmid (4 th season with RSL – 1 st full season as Chief Soccer Officer)		
HEAD COACH:	Pablo Mastroeni [4 th season with RSL – 3 rd full season as RSL HC; 8 th overall in MLS (COL 2014-17)]		
ASSISTANT COACHES:	Nate Miller (1 st season – formerly USL San Diego Loyal); Anthony Pulis (1 st season – formerly USL Miami FC); Jamison Olave (1 st season – formerly MLSNP Real Monarchs); Mirza Hrambasic – GK (1 st season – formerly MLSNP Real Monarchs); Joel Delass – Player Development Coach (2 nd season – formerly Monarchs); Sean Buckley – performance (1 st season – formerly Minnesota United)		
INCOMING TRANSFERS:	M/F Fidel Barajas (Charleston Battery – USA – signed Jan. 11, 2024); DF Alexandros Katranis (Piast Gliwice – Poland – signed Feb. 2, 2024); FW Matt Crooks (Middlesbrough – England – signed Feb. 9, 2024)		
KEY DEPARTURES: (2023 All Comp Stats)	FW Jefferson Savarino (11 goals, 7 assists → Botafogo – Brazil); FW Danny Musovski (9g, 4a → Seattle – MLS); M/F Damir Kreilach (8g / 1a → Vancouver – MLS); MF Jasper Löffelsend (1g, 2a → Colorado – MLS)		
OUT ON LOAN:	FW Rubio Rubin (3g, 2a → loaned to Queretaro – Liga MX); D/M Jaziel Orozco (loaned to Larne – No. Ireland – through May 2024); DF Delentz Pierre (loaned to Colo. Springs – USL through 2024 season); D/M Kevon Lambert (loaned to San Antonio – USL through 2024 season)		
ACADEMY HOMEGROWNS: * (incl. Playoffs)	DF Justen Glad (238 MLS* games, 13 goals, 1 assist); DF Andrew Brody (100 MLS* games, 2g / 14a); DF Erik Holt (42 MLS games, 1g / 1a); D/M Bode Hidalgo (43* MLS games, 1g / 1a); GK Gavin Beavers (10 MLS games, 765 min, 19 saves, 16 GA, 1.88 GAA); D/M Jaziel Orozco (4 MLS games) FW Xavier Gozo (1 MLS game); FW Axel Kei (1 MLS game); DF Tommy Silva (1 MLS game)		
		MF Jude Wellings DF Luis Rivera DF Delentz Pierre DF Zack Farnsworth MF Luca Moisa	
AVAILABILITY REPORT (for 29 May @ Seattle Sounders FC):			
	OUT:	DF Kevin Bonilla (knee injury suffered 2/14 v TOR) MF Pablo Ruiz (knee injury suffered 3/5/24 in training) DF Marcelo Silva (hamstring injury suffered 4/2/24 in training) DF Erik Holt (hamstring injury suffered 4/3/24 in training)	
	QUESTIONABLE:	DF Bode Hidalgo (hamstring injury suffered 5/11/24 at LAG) DF Bryan Vera (back spasms suffered 5/21/24 in training)	
	REAL MONARCHS:	FW Matthew Bell, DF Zack Farnsworth, MF Jude Wellings, FW Xavier Gozo, (MLS NEXT Pro Duty) FW Axel Kei, MF Luca Moisa, FW Ilijah Paul	

THREE-GAME WEEK CONTINUES AT SEATTLE WEDNESDAY ::

Real Salt Lake (8-2-5, 29 pts., 1st West MLS) resumes its 2024 MLS regular season – the Club's 20th and Major League Soccer's 29th – Wednesday night in Seattle, RSL looking to continue momentum from its recent 7-point week that included last Wednesday's 2-0 home win over Seattle and a remarkable 5-3 come-from-behind win over Rocky Mountain Cup rival Colorado Rapids ...

Kickoff Wednesday at Lumen Field is at 8:30p MT, available on Apple TV+ / MLS Season Pass, with **Max Bretos** and **Lloyd Sam** (ENG) and **Jesus Acosta** and **Carlos Suarez** (SPN) on the call ...

First-place RSL – led by Captain **Chicho Arango** and his 13 goals / 8 assists in 15 MLS games thus far – enters the midweek match riding an 11-game unbeaten run (seven wins, four draws) dating back to March 9 at home, a stretch that has seen what was one of Major League Soccer's staunchest defenses (six goals allowed in first nine games of the streak, with five clean sheets) earn four points in its last two matches, despite shipping three goals against Colorado May 18 and at Dallas on May 25 ...

During the current MLS run, RSL has outscored opponents 25-12, scored first in six of the 11 matches and scored five game-winning goals – as well as Saturday's dramatic equalizer – in the final 15 minutes of matches ...

RSL visits Seattle midweek with a 3-1-4 / 13-point road record, earning points in seven straight matches away after the 0-2 loss Feb. 21 at Miami in the 2024 MLS opener ... RSL scored first in five of the seven road results, including draws at St. Louis, Minnesota and LA Galaxy (all undone by late goals conceded), along with wins at Chicago and Philadelphia ... RSL also won 2-1 at Vancouver after conceding first, prior to Saturday's historic comeback that saw RSL score three times in the final half-hour plus stoppage to rescue a point after going down 0-3 in Frisco ...

BACK ON ROAD FOR ANOTHER MONTH ::

This week's trips to Dallas and Seattle mark the fifth and sixth road matches for RSL from mid-April to mid-June, the Claret-and-Cobalt playing eight out of 12 away from home during that stretch, with four of the final five in the span broken up by a home game against Austin on June 1 and the FIFA international break on June 8 ... RSL continues on to Montreal and

Kansas City on June 15 / 19 prior to a home match against the Galaxy on June 22 ...

RSL's home / road splits don't even out until after Leagues Cup, when RSL will host six of its remaining nine MLS reg. season contests from August 25 through to Decision Day ...

SOUNDING OFF AGAINST SEATTLE ::

Just two weeks ago, midweek MLS action saw RSL rebound from a disappointing 2-2 road draw at LA Galaxy on May 11 with a solid 2-0 win over visiting Seattle Sounders FC on May 15, RSL riding another **Andrés Gómez** game-winning goal, a goal and an assist from playmaker **Diego Luna** and the first home victory and clean sheet for teenage goalkeeper **Gavin Beavers** ...

In that match, newcomer **Matt Crooks** and centerback **Brayan Vera** also notched assists – each of them finding the scoresheet in consecutive games played – as Gómez and Luna have improved in support of Chicho ...

This week, RSL heads to Lumen Field, where it has not had great success in MLS reg. season action with just four wins and two draws against 12 losses all-time ... But RSL does have fond memories of success at the venue, winning here in 2022, a postseason shootout victory in 2021 and of course, its MLS Cup 2009 victory via shootout over LA Galaxy ...

Several ties bind RSL and Seattle, as both former GM **Garth Lagerwey** and current Chief Soccer Officer **Craig Waibel** once called Utah their long-time homes, while Assistant Coach **Freddy Juarez**, Academy GK coach **Nacho Hernandez** and Seattle players **Albert Rusnák** and **Kelyn Rowe** all arrived to the Sounders organization following stints in Salt Lake ...

WE'RE GOING STREAKING

The active 11-game MLS unbeaten run is RSL's **third-longest single-season streak** and the Club's fourth-longest overall in RSL's 20-season history, trailing last year's 11-game streak across three competitions, as well as a 16-game run from 2013 into 2014 (including a 12-game single-season run in 2014), and a Club-record 18-game unbeaten streak from July 2010 to April 2011 (2010 includes a 14-game single-season run) ...

For the first time ever, RSL now owns back-to-back seasons with unbeaten runs of nine games or longer ... RSL could establish a new single-season unbeaten streak record with results at Seattle, home Saturday

against Austin, as well as June 15/19 at Montreal / Kansas City ...

Real Salt Lake's recent three-game MLS win streak – snapped May 11 at LA Galaxy with the 95th-minute concession on the last kick of the game – was the Claret-and-Cobalt's first in nearly two years ... RSL last strung together three straight victories in league action in both May and March of 2022; RSL also had three such streaks in the 2019 season ... However, RSL had not enjoyed a three-game win streak involving two road victories – as the recent run did – since August, 2018 ...

LIVE BY THE SWORD, DIE BY IT TOO ::

The drama of RSL's last two weeks – coming back from 0-2 down to Colorado at home for a 5-3 win as well as earning a point at Dallas following an 0-3 deficit – indicate the combination of resilience and belief exhibited by **Pablo Mastroeni**'s side, always playing to the whistle ...

The May 11 concession at the death by RSL at LA Galaxy saw the team drop points after scoring first for the fourth time in 15 games this season ... While RSL has now seen five late game-winners of its own so far this year, it scored first and dropped points 2/24 @ STL (1-1 T), 3/9 v COL (1-2 L), 4/6 @ MIN (1-1 T) and 5/11 @ LAG (2-2 T) ...

Back on May 4 at home, RSL's game-winning goal in the 1-0 dub over Kansas City came in the final 15 minutes of the match, RSL's fifth such marker during its current 11-game unbeaten run, which has seen Head Coach **Pablo Mastroeni**'s side accrue seven wins and four draws to ascend to first place in the West ... RSL now holding the solo position atop the table this late in the season for the first time since August, 2016 ...

DEFENSE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL RUN ::

RSL visits Seattle on the heels of four clean sheets in its last eight matches, despite allowing eight goals in its last four games, and six in its last two ...

11 different players have appeared either in goal or along the back four during the active unbeaten run, as newcomer **Philip Quinton** and homegrown **Tommy Silva** have been forced into action due to an injury epidemic in mid/late April that also saw **Bryan Oviedo** play centerback in a 4-0 win at Chicago ...

Also deputized periodically at centerback was RSL Academy graduate **Bode Hidalgo**, a 22-year-old converted winger who has seen time mostly at right

back in his now 42-game / 21-start MLS career – in the middle of the back four in place of Glad/Vera ...

Second-year GK **Gavin Beavers**' clean sheet at Soldier Field on April 20 was also the youngest shutout performance by an MLS player in 2024, the Las Vegas native just turning 19 years old ... Beavers followed that up with a solid home performance in a 2-0 win over Seattle on May 15 ...

Veteran GK **Zac MacMath** had posted clean sheets on April 13 against Columbus and May 4 against Kansas City, while allowing just the one goal at Philadelphia in a recent 363-minute span played prior to the May 11 second half in Carson, the May 18 first half against Colorado and Saturday in Dallas. ...

The May 6 MLS roundup in The Athletic ranked MacMath third so far this year amongst MLS shot-stoppers, the advanced numbers putting the veteran in rarefied air ...

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CUP SPECTACULAR ::

RSL's scintillating comeback Saturday against Colorado to even up the 2024 Rocky Mountain Cup series saw the Claret-and-Cobalt improve to 5-1-1 at home w/ 16 points at America First Field in MLS action this year, previously defeating LAFC (3-0, March 2), St. Louis (3-1, March 30), Kansas City (1-0, May 4) and Seattle (2-0, May 15), while drawing with Columbus Crew (0-0, April 13) and losing at home on March 9 to Colorado (2-1, after taking a 1-0 lead) ...

For just the fourth time in the Club's now 629-game history, RSL rebounded from an 0-2 deficit to earn the full three points, riding 2-goal / 1-assist performances from both Arango and **Andrés Gómez** to defeat the Rapids 5-3 before a standing-room only crowd of 20,728 ...

Goals from **Chicho Arango**, **Andres Gómez** and **Anderson Julio** – the Colombian pair each netting a brace plus an assist, with the Ecuadorean proving late insurance fireworks – completed a historic comeback win for RSL in a game that saw the home side down 0-2 after 20 minutes – the four-minute period down multiple goals just the second time all season, and the first since Feb. 21 at Miami for the final seven minutes plus stoppage – again conceding in the early second half before scoring three goals in the final six minutes plus injury time to record the home triumph over bitter rivals ...

SUPERSUB ANDO DOES IT AGAIN

For the seventh consecutive matchday, RSL places at least one player – this week it is “supersub” **Anderson Julio** – to Major League Soccer’s “Team of the Matchday” for Matchday 16 of the 2024 season, following the Ecuadoran international’s goal and assist off the bench to spark Saturday’s scintillating comeback at Dallas, as RSL rebounded from an 0-3 deficit in the final half-hour to score at the death and secure the road point ...

Julio’s audacious banger in the 72nd minute – nominated for Week 16 Goal of the Week – brought RSL to just a goal down with roughly 20 minutes remaining ... Taking two touches 25 yards out following a pass from fellow substitute **Maikel Chang**, Julio ripped a right-footed laser that went upper 90 to Dallas GK Maarten Paes’ right ...

The goal was Julio’s third of the season for RSL, for whom he has now scored 20 career MLS goals, including 14 off the bench. Fifteen of Julio’s 20 career goals have come in the second half, including nine in the 80th minute or later ...

Julio also earned the assist on the 90+8 equalizer from MF **Nelson Palacio**, squaring a ball across the top of the box and finding Palacio open ... The Colombian midfielder’s goal was his first-ever in MLS, while the game-tying goal matched Justen Glad’s home header last year against Minnesota for the latest equalizer in RSL history ... The point secured at Toyota Stadium after falling down 0-3 marks the first time in RSL’s 629-game history that the team was able to come back from an 0-3 deficit ...

With the 3-3 desperation draw at Dallas, RSL’s active unbeaten run entering Wednesday’s trip to Seattle has been extended to 11 games, the third-longest single-season streak without a loss in MLS action in the Club’s 20-year history ... Head Coach **Pablo Mastroeni**’s men have also secured seven straight road results, last losing away on Feb. 21 in the MLS 2024 season opener at Miami ... Overall this season, RSL boasts a 3-1-4 / 13-point road record, second only to Minnesota in the West and Miami/Cincinnati/Philadelphia in the Eastern Conference ...

CHICHO CHASING MLS HISTORY

With another goal in Seattle on Wednesday, RSL striker **Chicho Arango** would become just the eighth player in MLS history to reach 50 career MLS regular-season goals in 78 games or fewer:

All-time MLS Players w/ 50 career MLS regular-season goals in 77 or fewer games:

<i>Player</i>	<i>Goal #</i>	<i>Game #</i>	<i>Date</i>
Zlatan Ibrahimovic	50	54	9/25/2019
Josef Martinez	50	54	10/28/2018
Carlos Vela	50	61	3/ 8/2020
Raul Diaz Arce	51	67	7/ 4/1998
Carlos Ruiz	50	69	8/21/2004
Roy Lassiter	52	75	7/18/1998
Taylor Twellman	50	77	4/27/2005
Chicho Arango	49	77	???

With a goal in either of his next two matches, Chicho would become the **second-fastest active player** to reach the milestone behind only Josef Martinez (54 games), possibly becoming just the fourth active player to reach the mark in fewer than 100 games:

Active players to reach the career 50-goal milestone in fewer than 100 career games:

<i>Player</i>	<i>Goal #</i>	<i>Game #</i>	<i>Date</i>
Josef Martinez	50	54	10/28/2018
Raul Ruidiaz	50	79	11/01/2021
Hany Mukhtar	51	93	05/20/2023
Chicho Arango	49	77	???

In MLS reg. season action, Chicho has scored 30 of his 49 career MLS reg. season goals during the 2021 and 2022 seasons in 51 games with LAFC (0.59 goals per game, and a rate of 0.72 goals per 90), and has now scored 19 in 26 games (0.76/game, 0.83 per 90) across the last 10 months with RSL, spanning the 2023 and 2024 seasons ...

Chicho needs 12 more Claret-and-Cobalt goals in the remaining 19 games of the current MLS campaign to surpass his LAFC output on a volume basis, with his per-game and per 90 numbers significantly more prolific at RSL ...

IRON MEN NO MORE

Two RSL players – MF **Emeka Eneli** (1330) and FW **Chicho Arango** (1321) – have played nearly every minute of the Club’s 15-game MLS season so far in 2024, with second-year man Eneli subbed out in Dallas to besmirch his previously perfect record, one of five players League-wide to have played every minute of his team’s slate in the first 14 games ...

DF **Andrew Brody** (1201) is the only other player to have appeared in all 15 games, not starting 4/27 at PHI or 5/11 at LAG ... Four other RSL players have appeared in 14 games, missing just one match this

year – **Diego Luna**, **Anderson Julio**, **Braian Ojeda** and **Andrés Gómez** with a heavily-congested May/June continuing this week ...

DF **Justen Glad** and MF **Matt Crooks** have each appeared in 13 of 15 contests thus far, with MF **Fidel Barajas** appearing in 12 matches along with GK **Zac MacMath** falling to 12 appearances with the scheduled Beavers start two Wednesdays ago vs Seattle ...

FINDING THE SCORESHEET

In support of Chicho, **Andrés Gómez** is now the Club's second-leading scorer this season, now with 7 goals and 5 assists in 2024, while playmaker **Diego Luna** adds 3 goals and 7 assists ...

FW **Anderson Julio** scored his third goal of the season Saturday while DF **Alex Katranis** boasts two goals and three assists, while British 10 **Matt Crooks** notched his fourth assist in 2024 Saturday ... Centerback **Bryan Vera** and teenage attacker **Fidel Barajas** rounds out the group that has the RSL scoresheet multiple times this season with two assists each, while **Nelson Palacio** and **Emeka Eneli** each have a goal ...

ANOTHER GÓMEZ GAME-WINNER ::

The **Andrés Gómez** game-winners (5/18 v COL, 5/15 v SEA, 3/2 v LAFC, 4/20 v CHI) now lead RSL with four GWGs this season, two ahead of both **Chicho Arango** and **Alex Katranis** ... Arango's late game-winner back at home on May 4 against Kansas City was his second of the season, with his first coming via PK back on March 30 as part of his hat trick at home against St. Louis ...

Both **Katranis** game-winners (3/23 @ VAN, 4/27 @ PHI) arrived in the final 15 minutes of games, as did Chicho's ...

The Gómez heroics on May 18 in Rocky Mountain Cup action marked his first game-winner of the quartet to come in the final 15 min, the young Colombian usually striking early ...

DIEGO LUNA EXTENDED LONG-TERM ::

RSL starlet **Diego Luna** – with three goals and seven assists on the season – joined **Pablo Ruiz** in signing a long-term contract extension with the Club in early March, keeping the affectionately known “Moon Boy” – or “Moon Man” as Brian Dunseth likes to say – with the Utah side through the 2026 season, with Club options for 2027/28 ...

Luna – who received his first-ever USMNT cap in January's friendly with Slovenia in San Antonio and was at the Olympic camp in March – is now considered a U22 roster designation for RSL, joining **Braian Ojeda** and **Nelson Palacio**, as winger **Andrés Gómez** is moved into the “Young DP” slot, alongside **Chicho Arango** and newcomer **Matt Crooks** (TAM-able in MLS' secondary window this summer) ...

RISING STAR LUNA SHINES BRIGHT ::

RSL playmaker **Diego Luna** emerged last season as a late-season talisman for the Claret-and-Cobalt, scoring critical goals in each of the final five matches – two MLS reg. season contests, providing the equalizers in both leg one and leg three of the Playoffs at Houston, and scoring the game-clinching PK in the leg two elimination match at home ... Luna recently earned his first U.S. Men's National Team appearance in the January friendly in San Antonio against Slovenia, starting and playing 77 minutes in the very same free role drifting off left wing that he has made his own at RSL ...

2024 should be a big year for Luna, whose role within the team is certain to expand after he has now started 29 of 37 games following his return from USYNT qualifying last summer ... The Paris Olympics schedule dovetails nicely with the Leagues Cup slate, minimizing Luna's potential absences from MLS reg. season contests ...

Last year, Luna's goal scored in the first leg at Houston saw him find the back of the net for a third consecutive match, his late equalizer back on Oct. 14 at LA Galaxy starting the run which continued on Decision Day in Colorado with his game-winner ... That 54th-minute goal in Houston made Luna the youngest playoff goal-scorer in RSL history, usurping Yura Movsisyan by about 16 months ... Luna's accomplishment also made him the 12th-youngest player in MLS history to find the back of the net in the postseason ... Luna then asked for the opportunity in the leg two home game to be the decisive fifth shooter against Houston, envisioning and ultimately delivering the series-extending score ...

Luna ended up with seven goals across all competitions in his first full season with RSL, the USA U-20 playmaker starting 21 of the Club's last 25 games of the 2023 season since returning from the FIFA Youth World Cup in Argentina ... The USA U-20 playmaker acquired in May, 2022, from USL Championship side El Paso Locomotive was named the MLS Player of the Matchday for Matchday 26, courtesy of his brace in the 3-1 home RSL win over New York Red Bulls on July 15 ... Luna's 2nd-minute goal in that game off a Savarino assist marked RSL's quickest goal since March 2022 (Bobby Wood), while his eventual game-winner off an intricate give-and-go with Musovski made him the

youngest player (19 years, 311 days) in RSL history to register a multi-goal goal (Olmes Garcia, June 2013 v LA Galaxy, 20 years, 282 days) ...

Last June 21 in St. Louis, Luna became the 98th player in RSL's 19-year history to find the back of the net in MLS reg. season action for the Claret-and-Cobalt, scoring in the 15th minute and assisting on goals in the 48th and 66th minutes ... While he is only the 6th-youngest player to score for RSL, Luna did become the absolute youngest in Club annals to score and assist in the same game, No. 599 all-time for the Club ...

ROCKY MOUNTAIN DISAPPOINTMENT ::

RSL's last loss occurred back on March 9 at home, RSL falling 1-2 against Rocky Mountain Cup rivals Colorado, with the Rapids reversing an early 1-0 deficit at America First Field in Sandy ...

Despite the first professional goal from second-year rock MF **Emeka Eneli** and a strong performance from 18-year-old GK **Gavin Beavers**, RSL was unable to finish its chances and fell at home to Colorado for the first time since 2020, and for the first time on Utah soil with fans in the building since 2007 ... just the fifth RSL loss overall in 29 MLS regular-season visits by Colorado to the Beehive State since RSL's inception in 2005 ...

The goal marked Eneli's first of his professional career, making him the 102nd all-time scorer in Real Salt Lake's 618-game history in Major League Soccer (now Katranis is 103rd in 629 MLS contests) ...

ANOTHER DEBUTANT FINDS THE FIELD ::

On May 11 at Dignity Health Sporting Park against the Galaxy, RSL saw homegrown DF **Tommy Silva** – a former UCLA Bruin and RSL Academy product signed in December – make his MLS debut, coming on for an injured Katranis early in the second half ...

Silva became the sixth RSL player to make his Club debut this season in the first 14 games, and the 210th RSL player all-time to appear in League action ...

RSL RIDES RAUCOUS ROAD WARRIOR MENTALITY ::

RSL returns to the road to blaze new trails midweek in Seattle, looking to improve on the 3-1-4 record away from home this year ...

RSL has won on the road in Vancouver on March 23 and at Chicago on April 20, prior to the April 27 win in Philadelphia ... Mastroeni's road warriors have scored

first in five of its eight road matches this season, settling for draws at St. Louis on Feb. 24 and at Minnesota on April 6, riding early goals en route to winning at Chicago and Philadelphia ...

A year ago, Head Coach **Pablo Mastroeni's** team amassed 12 road wins and five away draws across all competitions, against just eight losses, by far the most successful road campaign in Club history ...

RSL plays eight of its 12 matches away from home from April 20 to June 19 as a very busy May includes six MLS matches – two midweek – and a U.S. Open Cup road game, prior to a two-game road trip May 25-29 at Dallas and Seattle ...

CHICHO ARANGO STILL CHASING SUPERSTAR MIAMI DUO ::

When **Chicho Arango** finds the scoresheet, as he has in 11 of 15 MLS matches this year, RSL owns seven wins and three draws against one loss, the Claret-and-Cobalt failing to score only twice (@ MIA Feb. 24 and v CLB on April 13), with Chicho's assist on an **Emeka Eneli** goal back on March 9 the only one coming in a loss to Colorado ...

Saturday at Dallas and May 15 against Seattle marked the only two times RSL scored when Chicho did not, his only two previous goal/assist-less games this year coming in RSL shutouts at MIA and v CLB ... Back on April 20, Chicho led RSL's dominant 4-0 win at Chicago with the Club's first-ever 2-goal/2-assist performance, rebounding from the rare goose egg the week prior against the Crew ...

That zero against the Crew on April 13 meant that Arango saw his three-game, six-goal / two-assist streak snapped in the scoreless home draw despite a dangerous first half against Columbus ...

Chicho – the MLS Player of the Matchday for Week 10 – scored two braces in the week against LA and COL to move up the “goal contribution” table, with 13 goals and eight assists (21 goal contributions thus far on RSL's 30 goals this season) in 15 games played, trailing only Lionel Messi's Miami numbers (10g/12a) ... Chicho is two ahead in the MLS Golden Boot over both Luis Suarez (MIA) and Christian Benteke (DCU), with 11 goals, Chicho also needing just two assists this season to become RSL's third-ever 10g/10a player in 20 years, joining Albert Rusnák (11g/11a in 2021) and Jeff Cunningham (16g / 11a in 2006) ...

Chicho is also just five goals shy of breaking Alvaro Saborio's 2012 single-season scoring record for RSL, the Costa Rican striking for 17 that year ...

Chicho provided a three-goal explosion in a 21-minute span in the Utah side's come-from-behind 3-1 home win over St. Louis on March 30, the Club's first hat trick since September 17, 2018 (Damir Kreilach). Chicho's three-goal performance is just the seventh in RSL's now 629-game MLS history, the Colombian joining **Alvaro Saborio** (three hats – two in 2012, one in 2013), along with **Robbie Findley** (2009), **Javier Morales** (2014) and Kreilach. Former Captain, head coach and current Club director **Jason Kreis** also had a hat trick, albeit in the 2005 U.S. Open Cup ...

Arango now has two hat tricks in his MLS career – his first was for LAFC in late 2021 against Dallas – and boasts 112 goals as a professional, including 56 goals in 89 games across all competitions since arriving in MLS for LAFC and RSL ... Since appearing on the Wasatch Front last July, Chicho boasts 19 goals and 10 assists in 26 MLS reg. season appearances for the Claret-and-Cobalt, with those numbers increasing to 21 goals and 10 assists in 34 RSL games across all competitions (incl. Leagues Cup, Open Cup, Playoffs) ...

LEAGUES CUP KICKS OFF AUGUST 1 FOR RSL ::

On August 1, RSL kicks off its participation in the 2024 Leagues Cup, the second year of the 47-team, 78-game tournament, with three CONCACAF Champions Cup berths on the line ... RSL is grouped with a road tilt away at Houston Dynamo (MLS) on August 5, with the home opener on August 1 against Atlas CF (MEX) match at America First Field in its West 2 group, with single-elimination knockout games to follow leading up to an August 25 title match ...

Based on last year's fifth-seeded West finish (14W-12L-8T, 50 points, 48 GF / 50 GA), RSL will be grouped with both Houston and Liga MX side Atlas F.C. in Leagues Cup 2024 this July ... RSL last faced Atlas in the 2022 Leagues Cup "Showcase" match in Utah, dropping a 1-2 decision despite former DF Aaron Herrera's wondergoal from 65 yards away over the retreating goalkeeper ...

Due to the new for 2024 Leagues Cup seeding formula, RSL will once again travel to Houston for a group stage LC match in addition to its two MLS reg. season games against the Dynamo, with RSL now winless in its last six games against Houston – all last year – across all competitions ... Prior to the active six-game streak without a win against the South Texas side, RSL had seen great success against the Dynamo, which defeated RSL for the first time in 11 games dating back to 2017 in last year's Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup Semifinal ...

KATRANIS FIRE PROVIDES LATE GAME-WINNER IN PHILADELPHIA ::

RSL newcomer **Alex Katranis** scored his second game-winning goal on the road this year back on April 27 with an 89th-minute blast from nearly 30 yards out, settling a half-cleared **Maikel Chang** set-piece offering and lacing a shot far post past Andre Blake and securing the full three points for RSL's first road win at Philadelphia since 2016 ...

The 89th-minute ZAPATAZO – named the MLS Goal of the Matchday last week – was the sixth-latest game-winner during the 111-game **Pablo Mastroeni** era, with the 95+ "Damiracle" at Kansas City on Decision Day 2021 the most memorable ...

Here's the full list of late game-winners since Pablo's resilience mentality took hold at RSL:

AWAY:

95' – Damir Kreilach (2021 @ KC)
93' – Tate Schmitt (2022 @ NE)
91' – Bobby Wood (2021 playoffs @ KC)
91' – Anderson Julio (2023 @ Toronto)
90' – Albert Rusnak (2021 @ Dallas)
89' – **Alex Katranis** (2024 @ PHI)

HOME:

95' – Anderson Julio (2021 v Galaxy)
88' – **Andrés Gómez** (2024 v Colorado)
88' – Andrew Brody (2022 v Austin)

DEPTH TO BE ON DISPLAY AS ROTATION INCREASES ::

As RSL gets into the heavy May/June slate – six MLS reg. season games, the U.S. Open Cup contest, three midweek matches out of eight total – the expectation is that Mastroeni will implement additional squad rotation ...

With last year's mid-year success inspired by the Open Cup fresh in mind – RSL went from mid-April to mid-August losing just three of 24 matches prior to the Pablo Ruiz injury – the upcoming glut could provide ample opportunities for **Gavin Beavers**, **Bryan Oviedo**, **Philip Quinton**, **Nelson Palacio**, **Fidel Barajas**, **Anderson Julio** and young Academy products **Zavier Gozo** or **Tommy Silva** ...

Prior to Silva's insertion May 11 in LA, it was back on April 20 at Soldier Field, capping off an insane 30-hour period, that newly-acquired DF **Philip Quinton** joined four others to have made their RSL debuts in 2024 ...

This young season, RSL has also seen teenage playmaker **Fidel Barajas**, MF **Matt Crooks**, DF **Alex**

Katranis and MF **Noel Caliskan** make their MLS debuts for the Club ...

Quinton was acquired on Friday morning, April 19 in a trade from Columbus, meeting the team in Chicago that night, participating in group and individual video sessions on gameday, and appearing in the final 16 minutes of the eventual 4-0 victory ...

The 22-year-old centerback out of Notre Dame was drafted by the Crew with the 25th overall MLS SuperDraft pick – a pick originally owned by RSL and sold to Columbus for \$50,000 GAM – and won an MLS NEXT Pro title in 2022 prior to being a part of the Crew's MLS Cup 2023 championship side ...

Quinton had started the weekend prior at America First Field, a pivotal figure in RSL's 0-0 home crew with the Crew on April 13 ...

Surely the current injury epidemic could see young RSL players such as **Zavier Gozo**, **Bertin Jacquesson**, **Daron Iskanderian**, **Aiden Hezarkhani** and others potentially make their 2024 / RSL debuts as well ...

PABLO PROMISES TACTICAL EVOLUTION ::

RSL has moved to 4-2-3-1 in 2024, after playing mostly a flat 4-4-2 last season ... Head Coach **Pablo Mastroeni**, now in his fourth season with RSL (third full year as manager) and his crew – an entirely new staff of four on-field assistants [former USL head coaches **Nate Miller** (San Diego), **Anthony Pulis** (Miami FC) and **Jamison Olave** (Real Monarchs), along with GK Coach **Mirza Hrambasic**] and a new performance/fitness coach (**Sean Buckley**, formerly of Minnesota United / Cruz Azul) for 2024 – looks to increase possession, create more central penetration (i.e., not as wing dependent as 2022/23) and utilize overlapping outside backs in the attack to involve both pivots and two 10s when RSL has the ball ...

In theory, this leaves iconic striker **Chicho Arango** up top, **Diego Luna** in a free role starting on the outside and coming in, **Andrés Gómez** with the sizzling pace to stretch and get behind allows new attacking mid **Matt Crooks** and some combination of **Braian Ojeda** / **Nelson Palacio** / **Emeka Eneli** to involve themselves in the attack, all while protecting what is basically a back three of **Brayan Vera** / **Justen Glad** and one other as either **Alex Katranis** / **Bryan Oviedo** move up the left side, or **Andrew Brody** bombing forward on the right ...

CORE CONTINUITY REMAINS ::

For 2024, RSL returns 10 of the 11 starters (Savarino) from last year's shootout-laden playoff series with Houston, a series that saw RSL without the services of star striker **Chicho Arango** (relegated to spot duty off bench in Legs 2 and 3 following late-season hamstring injury) and metronomic midfielder **Pablo Ruiz** (August 8 meniscus tear in Leagues Cup Round of 16 match at LAFC) ... Overall, nearly 26,000 combined minutes return for RSL from 2023 to 2024, despite the losses of nearly 45 combined goal contributions from the departed Savarino, Kreilach, Musovski & Rubin ...

Several critical contributors from last year – GK **Gavin Beavers**, DF **Brayan Vera**, DF **Emeka Eneli**, MF **Nelson Palacio**, FW **Andrés Gómez** and FW **Chicho Arango** – are first-year RSL players no longer, while several others – DF **Bode Hidalgo**, DF **Brayan Oviedo**, MF **Braian Ojeda**, MF **Diego Luna** – vault into 2024 for their second full seasons in Utah ...

IT'S CHICHO TIME ON THE WASATCH ::

As Real Salt Lake embarked on the early days of its 20th season in Club history, famed Colombian striker **Chicho Arango** was named the sixth Captain for the Claret-and-Cobalt, assuming the armband and related duties vacated by the recent departure of beloved leader Damir Kreilach, now in Vancouver ...

ALL-TIME RSL CAPTAINS:

Chicho Arango – 2024 -

Damir Kreilach – 2022-23

Albert Rusnák – 2021

Kyle Beckerman – 2008-20

Carey Talley – 2007

Jason Kreis – 2005-07

Arango arrived on the Wasatch Front last July as the Claret-and-Cobalt's most acclaimed acquisition ever ... the former LAFC / Pachuca striker becoming the fifth-ever RSL player to score in his debut – a 4-0 home win over Orlando – and the only RSL man to find the back of the net in his first 4 appearances with the Club (three MLS, one Leagues Cup) ...

Joining a locker room that has also seen veteran leaders **Marcelo Silva** and **Zac MacMath** serve as Captain – as well as **Justen Glad**, the first-ever and only Homegrown to wear the armband in recent years – Chicho would have to remain at an elite level with RSL through the 2037 season to eclipse the longevity of the man who changed RSL's competitive culture, Cup-winning former Captain and all-time Club legend Kyle Beckerman ...

RESOLUTE RESILIENCY IN “BOUNCEBACK” SITUATIONS ::

RSL snatch-and-grabbed the three points in Vancouver back on March 23 to avoid back-to-back losses yet again in the 116-game **Pablo Mastroeni** era, improving now to 18 wins and 10 draws against just 9 losses when taking the field following a loss ... Amazingly, four of those nine “back-to-back” losses occurred in the first month following Pablo Ruiz’ mid-August 2023 knee injury ...

Since August 2021, RSL has now posted an 18W-9L-10T mark in matches following a loss, suffering back-to-back losses just nine times in **Pablo Mastroeni**’s 116 games at the RSL helm ... Even with the shootout results recorded officially as draws, the Claret-and-Cobalt have now earned a result in 28 of 37 matches following a loss in the “Pablo era” – a run which now includes a pair of USOC 2023 elimination wins, the postseason dub against Houston and the bounceback win over León following the Monterrey home loss during the late July Leagues Cup slate ...

RSL’s mentality also abounds in bouncing back from losses during the Mastroeni era, with its collective resilience and the “never say die” attitude on full display in leg two of the Audi 2023 MLS Cup Playoff series at Houston, once again avoiding consecutive setbacks ...

The trend continued with the 1-1 draw Feb. 24 in St. Louis following the season-opening loss at Miami, as well as the March 23 2-1 win in Vancouver following the rare home loss to Colorado on March 9 ...

A CENTENARY FOR CHICHO ::

As he welcomed his former MLS side LAFC to Utah on March 2 for the first time since his arrival on the Wasatch, RSL Captain **Chicho Arango** was honored pre-game for scoring his 100th professional goal Feb. 24 at St. Louis ... Chicho faced LAFC twice last year, once in Leagues Cup (0-4 loss) and once in MLS (1-0 win), both at BMO Stadium in Los Angeles ...

That fateful March 2 match saw Chicho provide the third of a stellar opening 45 for RSL, giving him 101 for his career and two goals in the first three games this year, outpacing his personal preseason prediction of 17 goals in 34 MLS games for RSL in 2024, precisely one goal every two matches ...

THE CHICHO EFFECT ::

As the Summer 2023 window opened, Colombian star and former LAFC and Pachuca FW **Chicho Arango** got off to an historic start with RSL, as the new Designated Player announced his presence in Utah

and his return to MLS with authority July 8 against Orlando, finding the back of the net just 23 minutes into his Claret-and-Cobalt debut, providing the game-winning goal in a dominant 4-0 win over Orlando ... Arango became just the fifth of 200 players in RSL’s 19-year history to score in his debut (Dunseth, Tarley, Findley, Julio) ...

Arango followed up his debut goal with an assist on July 12 in Kansas City just seconds after coming on, setting up former LAFC teammate Danny Musovski for a critical goal early in the second half ... Arango joined Rubio Rubin (2021) as the only two RSL players to score or assist in their first two matches with the Club; when Chicho earned his way onto the scoresheet with an assist on **Diego Luna**’s July 15 opener against New York Red Bulls, he became RSL’s first-ever player with goal contributions in his first three games upon debut, a mark extended to four with his isolation slammer in the Leagues Cup opener against Seattle to make it 2-0 for RSL in the 51st minute of an eventual 3-0 win ...

Arango’s first two weeks on the field last summer for RSL saw him become the first-ever player in the then 19-year, 200-player, 604-game MLS history for the Utah MLS side to score or assist in his first three League games ... Arango’s arrival benefitted several RSL players – including Musovski, along with FW Jefferson Savarino, MF Diego Luna, Captain Damir Kreilach, FW **Andrés Gómez**, FW Rubio Rubin and others – who each saw their attacking space, time, quality and opportunity increase ...

Arango, the former LAFC striker – named the 2021 MLS Newcomer of the Year and part of the 2022 MLS Cup and Supporters Shield championship runs in LA with the Black-and-Gold – returned to MLS last summer after six months at Pachuca in Liga MX ... Arango – with two caps for the Colombian national team – boasted 32 goals in 58 all-time appearances with LAFC, and had been training with RSL since his June 10 arrival in Utah ...

Chicho pulled his hamstring on Oct. 7 at home 25 minutes into a 2-3 loss to Kansas City, forcing the striker to miss three full games, and only partially participate in legs two and three of last year’s postseason series with Houston ...

WINTER WONDERLAND ON MARCH 2 ::

In its season-opening home contest nearly three months ago, RSL rode a pair of first-half goals and an assist from FW **Andrés Gómez** to dominate a weather-delayed and weather-affected 3-0 result against visiting LAFC back on March 2 ... FW **Chicho Arango** also scored to add to his legendary career (106), MLS (51) and RSL (16) goal-totals, the Colombian now with eight goals in nine MLS matches this year ... Arango

and **Diego Luna** each tallied assists as well, while GK **Zac MacMath** registered his first clean sheet of the season ...

THE ANDRÉS SNÓ-MEZ GAME ::

RSL winger **Andrés Gómez** – the 21-year-old Colombian who arrived to Utah a year ago from Millonarios (Colombia) having never even SEEN snow, much less having played a competitive game in it – doubled his 2023 goal total in the first half, scoring not once but twice against LAFC ... To top it all off, five minutes into first-half stoppage, Gómez found countryman **Chicho Arango** for the third RSL goal of the first 45' to notch his first assist of the season ...

A year ago, Gómez arrived on the Wasatch Front amongst great fanfare, the most expensive acquisition in Club history – just under \$3 million – prior to the \$6 million Chicho purchase five months later ... Across all competitions in 2023, Gómez scored once and added six assists, with five of those setups earning “game-winning” status ...

The former U22 signing has now been moved to “Young DP” status following the departures of Jefferson Savarino and Damir Kreilach, as well as **Diego Luna's** new contract extension, which adds the up-and-coming USMNT / USYNT Olympic standout to a U22 trio that also boasts Paraguayan international **Braian Ojeda** and Colombian destroyer **Nelson Palacio** ...

Both Gómez and Palacio were late reporting to RSL's preseason festivities due to their participation in December with the full Colombian National Team and January's U23 Olympic qualifying side for *Los Cafeteros* ...

EXORCISING LAFC DEMONS ::

RSL has now won two consecutive games against LAFC, the 3-0 home win following up on last October's 1-0 road victory ... Previously, RSL could only boast an early-season 2020 home win over LAFC as well as the 2018 postseason shocker prior to the two recent wins, which improve RSL's all-time record against LAFC to 4 wins against 12 losses across all competitions ...

LAFC had always been comfortable in Sandy, winning at the typically road-resistant RSL venue in each of its six seasons ... RSL was just 1W-6L-0T against the Black-and-Gold at America First Field prior to Saturday, the teams splitting both LAFC visits during the Covid-affected 2020 season ... In now eight MLS reg. season matches on Utah soil, LAFC has still outscored RSL 18-9, by far the worst home goal differential in Claret-and-Cobalt annals ...

Despite dropping its home opener a year ago, 1-2, against visiting Austin FC for just its second home-opening loss ever, RSL has enjoyed great success in season kickoffs on Utah soil over the years, posting an all-time 8-2-6 (W-L-T) record in Sandy at the venue now known as America First Field, outscoring opponents 30-19 on aggregate ... Prior to last season's stumble, the lone previous home-opening setback was a brutal 1-5 performance in 2018 against expansion LAFC ... During the entirety of the Club's 20-year history, RSL is now 9-2-9 overall (35-23 on aggregate), including the early Rice-Eccles years ...

RUIZ OUT FOR YEAR ::

The elation from the dramatic March 2 rollercoaster in the wind, lightning and snow came to a screeching halt in the following Tuesday's training session, as MF **Pablo Ruiz** suffered a contact injury to his left knee, with an MRI later that day revealing an isolated ACL tear ... Ruiz underwent surgery early the following week, with the procedure performed by RSL Team Orthopedic Surgeon **Dr. Dain Allred** of Intermountain Hospital in Provo ...

A 25-year-old Argentine who has often been on Chile's preliminary rosters in the last several FIFA windows started each of RSL first two games this season – a road loss at Miami and the away draw in St. Louis – before coming off the bench for the final 20 minutes of the March 2 3-0 win over visiting LAFC ... In the days before the injury, Ruiz had just signed a new long-term contract with RSL that will keep him on the Wasatch Front through the 2026 season, with Club options for 2027/28 ...

LA QUINCEAÑERA DENIED ::

On Feb. 21 in Miami, RSL dropped an MLS season opener for the first time since 2009, registering a 14-game unbeaten run on MLS Opening Weekends from 2010-present with 7 wins and 7 draws in that time ...

With only two of those matches played at home (2014 – 3-0 W over Toronto and 2017 – 0-0 with Toronto), RSL was 6W-0L-6T away in openers since 2010, including two previous visits to Florida – both draws at Orlando (2016 – 2-2 and 2020 – 0-0) ... That 2016 tilt at what was then Camping World Stadium in Orlando saw RSL take a 2-0 lead on a pair of Joao Plata goals (26' / 66'), before conceding a pair in 94+/95+, forcing the Claret-and-Cobalt to settle for a disappointing draw ... Incidentally, RSL won MLS Cup 2009, so hope is alive despite the Feb. 21 loss ...

2023 IN REVIEW ::

The 2023 RSL side amassed the Club's seventh 50-point season all-time (out of 19 years in MLS), just the second year with 50 or more since the 2014 campaign ... Finishing 11th overall out of 29 teams, RSL crashed out of the postseason by the thinnest of margins for a second consecutive year (Austin 2022, Houston 2023), dropping a road shootout tiebreaker in Texas ...

RSL smashed its previous incoming transfer record on two occasions a year ago, spending nearly \$3 million on U22 initiative signing **Andrés Gómez** from Millonarios in Colombia in January, later doubling that acquisition cost to bring heralded striker **Chicho Arango** back to MLS following a six-month stint at Pachuca (Liga MX) ...

RSL also spent significant funds to sign two other young Colombians – DF **Brayan Vera** (América de Cali) and MF **Nelson Palacio** (Atlético Nacional), while also making the one-year loan of Paraguayan international **Braian Ojeda** a permanent transfer from Nottingham Forest permanent in mid-summer ... All-told, RSL ownership dropped nearly \$16 million in player acquisition costs in 2023, with an expectation for those seeds to bear fruit in 2024 and beyond ...

Thirty-two (32) different players saw action for RSL in 2023, including then-15-year-old FW **Axel Kei** and 16-year-old **Zavier Gozo** making their Homegrown MLS debuts late in the season, along with fellow Academy products GK **Gavin Beavers** and DF **Delentz Pierre** also making their first-ever first-team appearances; a trio of collegiate picks – D/M **Emeka Eneli**, FW **Bertin Jacquesson** and FW **Ilijah Paul** – also made their professional debuts, while the international quartet of FW **Andrés Gómez**, MF **Nelson Palacio**, DF **Kevon Lambert** and DF **Brayan Vera** notched their first-ever MLS appearances last season ...

TRIO OF NEWCOMERS LOOKING TO MAKE IMPACT ::

Newcomers **Alex Katranis** (Greek left back), **Matt Crooks** (English midfielder) and **Fidel Barajas** (17-year-old Mexican-American playmaker) – collectively acquired for approx. \$1.5 million – should contribute greatly this season across all competitions, with the two veteran foreign transfers expected to start in **Pablo Mastroeni**'s ideal RSL XI, and the extremely-talented, poised and precocious teenager ready to surprise and delight off the bench ...

SUMMER SURGE IN 2023 ::

During a nearly four-month span from mid-April to early August, RSL dropped just three of 24 games across all competitions, including MLS reg. season action, its Open Cup run to the Semifinals and its initial Leagues Cup foray ... In the ninth minute of the Aug. 8 Leagues Cup Round of 16 match at LAFC, a non-contact knee injury to metronomic MF **Pablo Ruiz** snapped the run of good form and changed the trajectory of RSL's campaign, the Club eliminated that day from Leagues Cup and falling in 120 minutes the next time out at Houston in the Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup Semifinal at Houston two weeks later ...

Following the Ruiz injury, RSL lost six of its next seven games, essentially learning how to play anew; RSL then went 3-1-1 down the stretch – including the Club's first-ever reg. season win at LAFC, with an 81st-minute dagger by former Black-and-Gold icon **Chicho Arango** – to stabilize the ship entering the Audi 2023 MLS Cup Playoffs as the fifth seed, just three points out of second place ... A hamstring injury suffered by Chicho in a bitter 2-3 home loss to Kansas City in the year's penultimate contest brought massive repercussions in the three-game series with Houston, which saw RSL drop leg one, 1-2, at the Dynamo, win at home via shootout in leg two, and ultimately drop another shootout in leg three away to end a once-promising campaign ...

MASTROENI THE MAGICIAN ::

RSL boss **Pablo Mastroeni** leads the Utah side into 2024 for his third consecutive FULL season at the helm, the former USMNT star named interim manager in late 2021 ... During his time on the Wasatch Front, Mastroeni has led the Claret-and-Cobalt to three consecutive postseasons, **the ONLY Western Conference side with that distinction** ... Last year, RSL advanced to the MLS Cup Playoffs for the fifth time in the last six years (2020 Covid campaign the lone exception) and for the 13th occasion in the last 16 seasons since the Club' initial playoff foray in 2008, its fourth season in existence ...

Mastroeni, now 47 years old – an icon as an MLS player from 1998-2013, most of those years with RSL's Rocky Mountain Cup rival Colorado Rapids – arrived on the right side of the Rockies as an assistant coach prior to the 2021 season, before being elevated to the interim head coaching role that August ...

During Mastroeni's 116 games at the RSL helm across all competitions, the Claret-and-Cobalt now own a 48W-40L-28T mark, RSL outscored 169-174 in MLS, playoffs, Open Cup, Leagues Cup and exhibition play over the last 28 months ... Only former HC Jeff Cassar

(2014-16) reached 100 career reg. season points in the same number of League games (70) in RSL history as Mastroeni, after inheriting the **Jason Kreis** powerhouse a decade ago ...

The RSL job is Mastroeni's second head coaching stint, as the Arizona native amassing a 40W-55L-37T record with Colorado from 2014-17 ... This period includes the Rapids' all-time best reg. season in 2016, which saw the Mastroeni-led side go 15W- 6L-13T and allow just 32 goals in 34 games, finishing 2nd in the West behind Dallas before falling in the West Final to eventual champion Seattle ...

In 2020, Mastroeni spent one season as Tab Ramos' assistant in Houston, then matriculating to Utah a year later, where he quickly changed the mindset and culture of the locker room, growing a tight-knit culture built by pride, belief and dedication to the group ...

Mastroeni's RSL side has dropped back-to-back games just nine times overall in 116 games coached, displaying resilience and tenacity admired across North America for its collective "xDAWG" persona ...

As a player, Mastroeni served as a mentor to RSL icon **Kyle Beckerman**, when both shared the Miami Fusion FC locker room in the late 1990s, and shortly thereafter in Colorado ... Mastroeni became a breakout star of the United States' 2002 World Cup Korea/Japan Men's National Team, barely appearing during qualifying to start at centerback against Portugal, Mexico and Germany in the USA's thrilling run to the quarterfinal stage, its deepest progression ever on the world's largest sporting stage ...

Four years later, Mastroeni started each of the first two games for the 2006 USA World Cup side in Germany, against Czech Republic and Italy ... All told, the Phoenix, Ariz. native appeared in 65 games for the Stars-and-Stripes between 2001-09, playing for Bruce Arena and Bob Bradley ...

PERENNIAL PLAYOFF PARTICIPATION ::

Last year, RSL advanced to the postseason for a third consecutive season under the guidance of Head Coach **Pablo Mastroeni** ... As a Club, RSL was playoff-bound for the fifth time in six seasons – missing only the Covid-affected 2020 campaign – and for the sixth time in the last nine seasons (2015 / 2017) ... Mastroeni and staff used 32 players across 46 games in all competitions during 2023, as RSL advanced to the final four of the annual Open Cup tourney and to the Round of 16 in the inaugural Leagues Cup, prior to its Round One / Best of Three ouster at Houston last November ...

Overall, RSL has qualified for the postseason in 13 of its 16 seasons played since first advancing to the postseason in 2008, RSL's fourth season in existence ... RSL won MLS Cup in 2009, defeating the star-studded LA Galaxy via penalty-kick shootout in Seattle ... Four years later, RSL fell via the same tiebreaker in MLS Cup 2013 at Kansas City ... Overall, RSL has advanced in 11 of its 23 postseason series, with last year's playoff meeting with Houston marking RSL's 12th different opponent in 16 campaign qualifications ...

Real Salt Lake is one of three Western Conference teams and just five overall to have qualified for the Audi MLS Cup Playoffs in at least five of the last six seasons (2018-23), overcoming both internal and external volatility in the last six years through three different ownership situations and three different head coaches, as well as four different MLS Cup Playoff formats during this period ...

Two perennial postseason obstacles for RSL – LAFC and Seattle – join the Claret-and-Cobalt with the 5-out-of-6 qualification distinction, while two East teams – Philadelphia and New York Red Bulls – have qualified for the Audi MLS Cup Playoffs in six consecutive years from 2018-23 ...

The perennial nature of RSL's 13 postseason appearances in 16 years is remarkable when considering the League's growth and change dating back to 2008 ... Since RSL's first postseason appearance in 2008, the Utah side has advanced to 10 Conference Semifinal rounds and 5 Conference Finals – only SEA has reached more (12 Semis, 6 Finals) ... LA Galaxy also with 5 Conference Final appearances to match RSL ...

ROAD WARRIOR RESOLVE ::

In 2023, RSL enjoyed historic success on the road, developing a new standard and seeing its steely mentality manifesting in numerous "bounceback" moments under **Pablo Mastroeni** ... The Club's 2023 performance saw RSL accumulate an all-time RSL-best road record with 12 results in 17 away MLS matches, posting an 8W-5L-4T mark – with 28 of its 50 reg. season points amassed on the road ... RSL's previous road bests were recorded in 2012 and 2013, with identical 6W-7L-4T marks ... Additionally, RSL's 2023 U.S. Open Cup run saw the team win three matches away at Las Vegas, Portland and Colorado, prior to its road loss at Houston in the tourney semifinal ...

MASTROENI MENTALITY EQUALS ROAD SUCCESS ::

Since **Pablo Mastroeni** arrived at RSL for the 2021 season, first as an assistant coach and later as interim and then permanent head coach, the historically bad road performances that dogged the Club during its first 16 years have seemed to dissipate ... While there have been the periodic flameouts – an 0-5 loss at Portland in 2021, the 0-6 Easter massacre at Yankee Stadium in 2022, and the 0-4 at Columbus earlier in 2023 – RSL has simply never been more competitive or expected road points more frequently than it has in the last 36 months under Pablo's culture-building and leadership, evident with last year's Open Cup road run, featuring its first three away USOC wins in Club history, as well as its first two victories against MLS opponents in the competition ...

Since Pablo's arrival, RSL is now 19W-25L-20T (77 points) in MLS reg. season road matches following recent road draws at Galaxy / Dallas, along with a 1W-1L-4T (7 points) in MLS Cup Playoff matches on the road ...

In 2023, RSL was 3W-1L-0L away in U.S. Open Cup (9 points), giving RSL a total of 90 road points (1.31 points per game) earned in the 2021-2024 campaigns ... You'd have to go back to the 2012-14 seasons (62 total road points) to find a period with similar road results (1.22 points per game) ... With a strong 2024 on the road, RSL has the potential to put the 2012-14 success far away in the rear-view mirror ...

WHERE WILL THE 2024 GOALS COME FROM? ::

For yet another season, the big question for RSL remains – who will find the back of the net? ... So far this season, RSL has scored 22 goals, with Chicho contributing 18 (9g/7a) ... **Andrés Gómez** boasts 5g/4a so far this year following his scores in Chicago and Philadelphia, while **Alex Katranis** and now **Diego Luna** are the only other players to have found the back of the net multiple times (2x each) ... **Emeka Eneli** and **Anderson Julio** have also scored ... Expectations are also high this year to see **Matt Crooks** and **Fidel Barajas** contribute to the attack, while centerbacks **Justen Glad** and **Brayan Vera** combined for eight goals a year ago ...

This group lost three of the top seven scorers from a year ago across all competitions (Savarino, 11 goals; Musovski, 9 goals, Kreilach 8 goals), putting the pressure for 2024 onto **Chicho Arango** (8 goals / 1 assist in 2023), **Diego Luna** (7 goals / 1 assist), **Anderson Julio** and **Justen Glad** (5 goals each), Pablo Ruiz (4g / 4a), **Brayan Vera** (3g / 2a) and

Andrés Gómez (1g / 6a) to step up this season, along with recent acquisition **Matt Crooks** (23 goals in 115 games with Middlesbrough since Summer 2021) ...

Last year – as in 2022 as well – RSL truly employed a “goals by committee” approach, as the team saw 44 goals scored by 10 players during the final 22 games, with **Chicho Arango**, **Justen Glad**, **Jefferson Savarino**, **Diego Luna**, **Anderson Julio**, **Rubio Rubin** and then **Brayan Vera** each finding the back of the net...

The 4-0 over Orlando in Chicho's debut on July 8 provided RSL's largest margin of victory in three seasons, dating back to a July, 2021 win over Vancouver ... That particular 4-0 win boasts the unique circumstance of RSL playing as the visitors at what is now America First Field, due to the Whitecaps tenancy during the Covid-19 pandemic ...

The 4-0 win at Chicago on April 20 was the Club's largest margin of victory away from home since August, 2018, in a 6-0 win at Colorado ... Meanwhile, Chicho's 2g/2a performance marks the second time in RSL's 624-game MLS history for a four-contribution game, as Javier Morales had 3g/1a in May 2014 at Houston ...

WHO ELSE NEEDS TO STEP UP IN 2024? ::

In addition to the larger roles that **Diego Luna** and full-season availability for **Chicho Arango** should bring, U22 winger **Andres Gómez** – who a year ago had never been outside of Colombia and had never even seen snow – is also expected to take a massive leap forward, assimilating off the field and seizing his role in the new 4-2-3-1 setup ... Last season, across all competitions, Gomez had one goal and six assists, with five of the helpers registering as game-winning assists ...

Three key RSL players in recent years – homegrown defenders **Justen Glad** and **Andrew Brody**, along with fleet-footed super-sub **Anderson Julio** – need to bounce back from subpar 2023 year and return to their 2022 standards ... Despite establishing a new career-high with five goals scored last year, Glad struggled in the back half of the season, while Brody was hurt in preseason and while solid, seemed a touch less dynamic than RSL had seen in 2022 ... Julio provided moments of brilliance at both the 9 and out wide, but did miss long stretches of the year due to injury ...

Two of the midseason 2022 additions – holding mid **Braian Ojeda** (Paraguay / Nottingham Forest) and left back **Bryan Oviedo** (Costa Rica / Copenhagen) – also are expected to even out their 2024 campaigns after a choppy 2023 ... Ojeda felt more stable and could focus on football after Forest agreed on the sale to RSL in

late July, his security evident on the field down the stretch with his immense two-way presence; Oviedo overcame a rollercoaster year to start the final 11 games of the reg. season and playoffs, now battling with Greek outside back **Alex Katranis** for the presumed starting nod on the left side for 2024 ...

OFFSEASON ADDITIONS ::

With the primary MLS incoming transfer window closing early last week, RSL bolstered its outside back group with the addition of 25-year-old former Greece youth international **Alexandros Katranis**, while adding high-level experience and industry with attacking midfielder **Matt Crooks**, formerly of EFL Championship side Middlesbrough ...

Prior to those early February moves, RSL also made yet another domestic transfer, bringing 17-year-old Mexican-American playmaker **Fidel Barajas** to Utah from the Charleston Battery (USL Championship) ... Barajas – a native of Sacramento, Calif., and a catalyst for the Mexican U17 National Team – follows in the footsteps of new teammate **Diego Luna**, and will be eager to earn minutes for RSL as early as the season opener in Miami ... The youngster enjoyed a standout preseason in Portugal, and looks to create selection headaches for Mastroeni with potential impacts on the wings or centrally in midfield or up top ...

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the veteran Crooks brings a depth and breadth of experience to RSL, the former Middlesbrough attacker now joining RSL veterans **Marcelo Silva** (35 years, 61 days at kickoff this weekend), **Maikel Chang** (33-029), **Zac MacMath** (32-287) and **Tomas Gomez** (31-006) as one of five 'over-30' players on the roster ... The 2024 RSL group also boasts several teenagers, including: **[Luca Moisa** (15-080), **Luis Rivera** (16-183), **Axel Kei** (16-153), **Zavier Gozo** (17-060), **Fidel Barajas** (18-036), **Jude Wellings** (18-034) and **Gavin Beavers** (19-013), in addition to 20-year-old Olympic hopeful **Diego Luna** (20-226)] ...

YOUTH MOVEMENT ABOUNDS ::

While RSL's trio of U22 players **Diego Luna**, **Braian Ojeda** and **Nelson Palacio** have been considered for the last year as the future starlets alongside both emerging GK **Gavin Beavers** and the ascendant **Bode Hidalgo**, it was swiss-army knife **Emeka Eneli** – a college draft pick out of Cornell – that perhaps surprised the most a year ago, playing 2,265 minutes (1,494 MLS reg. szn/playoff, 501 U.S. Open Cup and 270 Leagues Cup) ... Eneli played the second-most rookie minutes in MLS (Duncan McGuire, Orlando) and stabilizing numerous lineups as a versatile right back and/or holding midfielder ... Another pair of Eneli's

fellow 2023 first-round picks – FW **Ilijah Paul** and winger **Bertin Jacquesson**, both signed to Generation adidas contracts – also provided both quality depth and flashes of brilliance in 2023, setting the stage for increased workloads this season ...

Looking to make their mark as college-experienced standouts for RSL are 2024 first-round draft pick **Matthew Bell**, a 21-year-old Jamaican international out of Marshall; now-injured right back **Kevin Bonilla**, a dual U.S./Honduras international out of the Univ. of Portland, along with former RSL Academy and UCLA homegrown signing **Tommy Silva** ... Another draft pick – FW **Damien Barker John** from St. Johns – could see action in Open Cup due to his outstanding Real Monarchs performances ... Teenagers **Fidel Barajas** and former Academy / Monarchs winger **Zavier Gozo** are also poised to further develop their games with a mix of MLS and MLS NEXT Pro action for Real Monarchs this year ...

MLSNP excellence should also blaze the MLS trail ahead for both Bonilla and T. Silva, as well as the much-heralded Academy standouts **Axel Kei**, and HG signings **Luis Rivera**, **Jude Wellings**, **Luca Moisa** and GK **Fernando Delgado**, amongst others ...

HARD WORK PAYS OFF:

During a whirlwind 5-day span in late January, 2024, 16-year-old FW **Aiden Hezarkhani** exemplified precisely the developmental player pathway that the RSL Academy has long imagined ... On a Wednesday, minutes prior to the Academy's monthly "tournament day," the Irvine, Calif., native was honored as one of 14 players to have logged a perfect 4.0 grade-point average last semester, receiving a commemorative jersey presentation from RSL Head Coach **Pablo Mastroeni** and RSL Asst. GM **Tony Beltran** ...

During that afternoon's tournament – a series of 5v5 and 6v6 games – Aiden not only starred individually, but proved throughout the competition that he raised the level of his teammates, regardless of age, status or skill level ... Upon the day's conclusion, Aiden was named "Player of the Tournament" and invited to participate the next day in first-team preseason training in Herriman, alongside several RSL and Monarchs players ...

In that Thursday training, second-year Generation adidas winger **Bertin Jacquesson** separated his shoulder, opening the door further for young Aiden to seize this opportunity ... He continued to flourish, and was invited back to Friday's first-team session ...

At the end of the day Friday, RSL's coaching staff and front office had seen enough – Aiden would travel for the two-week Atlantic Cup trip to Portugal, where he

not only held his own, but raised eyebrows with his skill, industry, learning capacity and daily improvement ... Hezarkhani – who also traveled to Santa Barbara with the team and logged the final 25 minutes in a 1-1 draw with Toronto FC – could see time with RSL daily in 2024, training with the globally-known veterans and pursuing his pathway to professional status through Monarchs games and potentially much, much more ...

Hezarkhani was slated to join Xavier Gozo in next week's U.S. U-17 Youth National Team camp, but an ankle injury suffered in February's MLS NEXT Academy match will limit the Irvine, Calif., native for the rest of March ...

FOR CLUB AND COUNTRY (YOUTH EDITION) ::

In addition to those eight, two standout RSL teenagers – **Fidel Barajas** (Mexico) and **Gavin Beavers** (USA) – also regularly represent Youth National Teams for the CONCACAF powers ... Barajas retains eligibility to switch his allegiance to his U.S. home, amidst Mexican media speculation that he will play for “El Tri” in the FIFA 2026 World Cup to be held in North America ... Barajas just returned from Mexico's U20 camp earlier this week, but will join Beavers in a USA U20 camp later this month ...

Beavers is often joined with invites to various USYNT camps – including the late March U20 setup in Morocco – by his former Academy and current Monarchs teammates, such as **Omar Marquez**, while another Monarchs player – **Juan Gio Villa** – has participated in Mexican setups ... Newly-signed RSL Homegrown **Luca Moisa** is included in USYNT U-17 camps, while Monarchs GK and former RSL Academy GK **Fernando Delgado** competes for Mexican YNT time in those camps ...

A frequent short-term call-up from the Monarchs, **Daron Iskanderian**, is a youth international for Armenia and will join their Olympic camp later this month as well ...

HOMEGROWN JUSTEN GLAD EXTENDED LAST YEAR ::

RSL announced in late September that now 27-year old Homegrown DF **Justen Glad** signed a contract extension to keep the 10-year veteran in Claret-and-Cobalt through the 2027 season ... The longest-tenured player on the current Real Salt Lake squad, Glad first signed with the Utah side on April 7, 2014, at the age of 17, as the Club's sixth all-time Homegrown Player, out of the 40 signed all-time ... Throughout his career, Glad has gone on to set countless Club records, including being the first Homegrown to don the Captain's armband, as well as the first to reach both the 100-game centenary and 200 games played milestones ...

In 2022, Glad became the first Homegrown to be named Real Salt Lake's Most Valuable Player, as voted by his locker-room peers ... Currently, Glad is the third-most capped active Homegrown Player still with their original club, having appeared in a total of 224 MLS reg. season matches for Real Salt Lake, trailing only Jonathan Osorio (276, Toronto FC) and Russell Teibert (254, Vancouver Whitecaps FC) ...

In the 60th minute of RSL's 0-0 home draw with Columbus on April 13, Glad surpassed legend Javier Morales to move into fifth place in MLS minutes played for RSL, with 19,256 ...

Glad just passed Morales in MLS starts May 4 against Kansas City with 218 for his career, moving into fifth all-time ... Additionally, Glad's 227 MLS reg. season appearances ranks sixth all-time behind Club legends Nick Rimando (369), Kyle Beckerman (350), Chris Wingert (247), Tony Beltran (245) and Morales (240) ...

HOMEGROWN KIDS MAKE MLS DEBUTS ::

Last Oct. 14 at LA Galaxy, a pair of RSL Academy products made their MLS debuts, as FW **Axel Kei** (15 years, 289 days) and FW **Xavier Gozo** (16 years, 206 days) played the final six minutes plus stoppage in a 2-2 match in Carson ... Kei's debut made him the fourth-youngest to appear in MLS history, and the youngest in RSL's 19 years, eclipsing DF Nik Besagno's 2005 appearance at 16 years, 201 days ... Gozo, who hails from Eagle Mountain, Utah, is the third-youngest debutant in RSL history, just five days older than Besagno ...

Each player recovered from early-season injuries to participate in the back half of Real Monarchs' MLS NEXT Pro 2023 season, and were added to RSL's roster last week via the “Extreme Hardship” mechanism, as RSL was missing 11 first-team players

due to injury, international duty or disciplinary suspension for that rescheduled Galaxy match ... With their participation, RSL used 32 players in 46 matches across all competitions last season in MLS, Open Cup and Leagues Cup action ...

Gozo had a brace in last month's 2-1 Monarchs win over Minnesota United 2, and has been critical to the RSL Academy U17s GA Cup run a few weeks ago ...

ERASING THE GLITCH IN HOME FORTRESS MATRIX ::

On the flip side from RSL's recent road respectability, RSL's 2023 home form dipped to nearly unprecedented lows, as last year's RSL's home mark of 6W-7L-4T was its worst since 2007, when a 4W-7L-4T record on the Rice-Eccles turf marked the 19-year nadir ... This preseason, RSL players, coaches and leadership have openly discussed the goal of making its Sandy-based America First Field a fortress once again ...

From 2017-22 (barring the 2020 Covid year), RSL posted an MLS mark of 50 wins against just 17 losses and 18 draws, with a +61 goal differential ... During RSL's emergent heyday of 2008-14 – the “Golden Years of RSL” if you will – the Kreis/Lagerwey-built teams were dominant at home, with 70 wins against just 13 losses and 30 draws in MLS action ...

With a spike in 2024 season ticket sales, could RSL return AFF and the RioT fan base to its critical place as a difference-maker, taking advantage of the altitude with increased tempo and possession on the field? In 2022, the Club's first year under its new Blitzer/Smith ownership group, RSL sold out all 17 MLS contests, averaging 20,470 in the 20,000-seat building ... Last year saw just 9 sellouts due to weather and other concerns ...

FINDING FORM AT AFF ::

While RSL has been a historically elite home team during its 15 years here in Sandy, averaging nearly 2.00 points per game and a .700 win percentage, it took a five-win, two-draw, one-loss aggregate performance elevation during the Summer to even out dismal 2023 start/finish on Utah soil ... RSL started the season with back-to-back home losses in March, including a visit from St. Louis that saw the 4-0 scoreline emanate from four second-half goals for the second-worst home loss EVER ...

Between the league loss to LA Galaxy on May 31 and the 0-3 setback to Monterrey on July 26, RSL dominated visitors by a 15-5 scoreline in that 4W-0L-2T run, including the 10-1 suffocation three wins

against U.S. sides ORL, NYRB and SEA ... The second 45 minutes of the 3-1 win over León recalibrated the recent success at home, despite the 0-3 setback on August 26 against Houston ...

The 2-0 home win over Colorado on Sept. 2 provided a ray of light, with late Sept. matches against Dallas and Vancouver split, RSL going down 0-1 in each; coming back to win against the Whitecaps after allowing 3 in second half to Dallas ...

The Oct. 7 loss in the 2023 reg. season finale against Sporting Kansas City dropped RSL to 6W-7L-4T at home in MLS last year, RSL's worst home campaign since 2007 and its second-worst ever (expansion 2005 season), somewhat counteracting the Club's historically-elite road form, with RSL finishing just 3 points out of 2nd in the West and 6 points from STL atop the Conference ...

In Open Cup, Leagues Cup and the MLS Cup Playoffs, RSL posted a home record of 3W-1L-1T (w/ a shootout win in that draw) to bring the home mark to 9W-8L-5T overall, hopefully stoking the fires for nearly 14,000+ season ticket members to renew, recruit and grow their base for 2024 and beyond, reestablishing America First Field and The RioT fan group as a force within both MLS and CONCACAF ...

DOMINANCE AT AMERICA FIRST FIELD TO RETURN IN 2024?::

Despite last season's stumbles, RSL's overall performance in Sandy remains dominant over its history, with a 149-47-66 W-L-T mark in MLS action since moving into the suburban Salt Lake venue 15 years ago ... Across all competitions, RSL is now 176-63-77 (W-L-T) at the place now known as America First Field and affectionately housing the “RioT” fan clubs, with a 6-2-3 mark in the MLS Cup Playoffs, 8-1-2 in CONCACAF Champions League, 9-5-2 in the Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup, and 2-3-0 in various Leagues Cup competitions ... In international exhibition play, RSL is only 13-8-9 (W-L-T) ...

That perennially-consistent excellence on Utah soil provides RSL fans an incredible value proposition in North American major-league sports, with 2024 season tickets starting at approximately \$16 / match for a club that has proven to win nearly 70% of its home games over 15 seasons ... Visit www.RSL.com for season tickets and more information on the Club's 2024 Major League Soccer campaign, as the Utah side looks to build upon the last two years' 26 MLS sellouts and the 2022 Club-record average attendance of 20,470, RSL's new standard after 19 MLS seasons ...

HOMEGROWN FACTORY ::

RSL's roster boasts a League-high 15 homegrowns on its roster, including one young player who did not attend the vaunted RSL Academy during either its Arizona or Utah iterations but do occupy "homegrown" roster status – MF **Diego Luna** ... A pair of presumed RSL starters on the backline – DF **Justen Glad** and DF **Andrew Brody** – each own HG status, as do backups DF **Erik Holt** and DF **Bode Hidalgo** ... RSL has inked several young Academy standouts in recent years to MLS deals, including DF **Jaziel Orozco**, DF **Zack Farnsworth**, GK **Gavin Beavers**, FW **Axel Kei**, MF **Jude Wellings**, MF **Luis Rivera** and DF **Delentz Pierre** ...

The latest duo to join the list of a League-high total of 39 Homegrown players signed over the last decade-plus are FW **Zavier Gozo** – who saw six minutes of action as an emergency call-up late last year at LA Galaxy – and 15-year-old MF **Luca Moisa**, the youngest player to join RSL in each of the last two preseasons ... Former UCLA DF **Tommy Silva** signed with the Club in December to push the all-time league high HG signing record to 39 players since 2011 ...

Another signing from 2023 – Generation adidas FW **Ilijah Paul**, drafted 7th overall in the 2023 MLS SuperDraft from the Univ. of Washington – spent five months at the RSL Academy in Utah as an Arizona native but was unable to sign an HG contract due to not having spent 12 consecutive months prior to his 18th birthday as part of the RSL Academy program ...

#GENNASTRONG FOREVER ::

RSL kicks off its first season since 2013 without former Club Vice President **John Genna**, the former executive who passed away last August following a years-long battle against ALS ... John's generosity of spirit, infectious smile and love of helping others, as well as his tireless work ethic and ability to mediate solutions for all parties, will forever permeate the "RSL Family" ...

Please visit <https://www.RSL.com/news/Genna-Strong-Always> for details regarding the Club's continued fight for an ALS cure, as well as other ongoing community initiatives in John's memory ... The Genna family asks that we continue to display our **#GennaStrong** spirit and send donations to www.projectmainst.org on Genna's behalf ... Just hours prior to John's passing, RSL Head Coach **Pablo Mastroeni** talked during his Leagues Cup post-game on August 4 following a victory against León about what his relationship with Genna has provided since arriving in Utah during the 2021 season: <https://mls.imagencloud.com/record/~36a7d2f895> ...

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